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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author states that certain problems that have typically beset those concerned with professional preparation in physical education are caused by linguistic confusion. For this reason, he undertook a study in which he applied the Austinian technique of analyzing ordinary language to terms that are typically employed in the professional preparation of coaches and physical education teachers. These terms include (1) fact, (2) knowledge, (3) understanding, (4) ability, (5) competency, (6) skill, (7) appreciation, (8) attitude, (9) experience, (10) problem, (11) resource areas, and (12) function. The paper describes the limitations of the study and examines related literature. The methodology involved in using the Austinian technique is also explained. The findings are the definitions of the 12 terms cited above. (BC)

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A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE ORDINARY LANGUAGE EMPLOYED IN THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF SPORT COACHES AND TEACHERS

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Introduction

The analysis of concepts undoubtedly started before Socrates, but it wasn't until the twentieth century that there was such a sharp contrast drawn between analysis and other methods of philosophical endeavor.* Interestingly enough, it wasn't until the mid-1950's that educational philosophers became involved to a degree with so-called philosophical analysis, and then not until the mid-1960's that any philosophers of sport and physical education began to show even the slightest bit of interest or inclination to move in this direction as well. Whether this trend will be a lasting one remains to be seen.

To the unitiated at least it can all be most confusing. Despite the fact that various scholars of the Western world have been engaged in philosophical thought for more than 2,000 years, there is still controversy over the exact nature of philosophy. Early Greek philosophers thought that philosophy should serve a function not unlike that which we attribute to contemporary science. Today, scientific method is employed, of course, and it involves reflective thought and hypotheses, long-term observation, and experimentation prior to subsequent generalization and theory-building. This is how new knowledge is developed and, unless today's philosophers engage in this sort of activity, there is serious doubt whether they can claim that their investigation results in any knowledge after all. If not, what <u>is</u> the justification for philosophy?

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In the twentieth century there have been three major developments, and several sub-developments, within philosophy that have sought to answer this question through the medium of what might be called language analysis: (1) logical atomism, which was preceded at the beginning of the twentieth century by the "realist analysis" of Russell, Moore, and Bradley; (2) logical positivism, which was followed by "therapeutic" positivism or "Neo-Wittgensteinianism"; and (3) ordinary language philosophy. The main idea behind these approaches - those under categories #1 and #2 at least - is that philosophy's function is analysis. The last category (#3), ordinary language philosophy or linguistic analysis, or the related group of pursuits now known as "philosophy of language," assumes that the immediate goal of the philosopher is to explain the use, the function, or the actual workings of man's language. Within this third major category, one faction argues that a philosopher should help man refrain from misuses of his ordinary language, while another group believes that they as philosophers should assist with the reconstruction of man's ordinary language.

It is this third approach that will be employed in this present investigation in an experimental fashion. The investigator is quick to use the word "experimental," mainly because he has not employed it previously, and also because he views this type of philosophizing as important but definitely as a "handmaiden" to philosophy as it engages in its major tasks.

The reader should keep in mind that it was during the period between 1930 and 1952 that Wittgenstein decided that it would not be possible to devise a language so perfect that the world would

be accurately reflected. He came to believe that much of the confusion and disagreement over philosophy emanated from the misuse of language in several ways. He believed that it was necessary to decide what the basic philosophical terms were, and then it would be possible to use these terms correctly and clearly so that all might understand. With this approach it may be possible for the philosopher to solve some problems through clarification of the meaning of certain terms which have been used synonymously (albeit often incorrectly). In this way man may be able to truly achieve certain knowledge about the world. Philosophy practiced in this way becomes a sort of logico-linguistic analysis, and most certainly not a set of scientific truths or moral exhortations about "the good life."

Statement of the Problem. The main problem of this investigation was to apply the Austinian technique of a[illegible]yzing ordinary language to the terms that are typically employed in the professional preparation of coaches and teachers. The basic assumption is that these words (e.g., knowledge, experience, skills, etc.) are typically employed loosely and often completely improperly.

In order that the basic problem posited may be answered in a reasonably comprehensive and satisfactory manner, the following sub-problems, phrased as questions, will be considered initially:

a. What particular area of the language will be considered for study? (The terms that are typically employed in the professional preparation of coaches and teachers)

b. What terms will be recommended by a team using free association as a technique after the reading of relevant documents has been completed? (At this point use of a good dictionary is essential)

c. How does the team or group decide whether the terms included are appropriate? (By describing circumstances and conducting dialogues)

d. What results may be formulated that are correct and adequate in relation to the terms which have been chosen initially; have been described clearly and in reasonable detail; and which have been accepted eventually as correct in the circumstances in which they are typically employed? (The terms selected are defined clearly, checked carefully on the basis of the experiences of the team members, and employed in a sequential fashion to describe accurately the total experience under consideration)

Need for the Study. The need for this particular study became most apparent to the investigator while serving as a member of an Experimental Undergraduate Physical Education Committee in the 1963-64 academic year at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana under the chairmanship of Professors L. J. Huelster and C. O. Jackson. The group realized very soon that their discussions were accomplishing very little because of a "language problem." They were using the same terms or words to describe the professional preparation experience of coaches and teachers of physical education, but they were using these terms differently (i.e., with different meanings). It became obvious that certain basic or fundamental terms would have to be selected, defined, used in descriptive statements, re-defined (perhaps), and then related in a sequential narrative of some type.

Limitations and De-limitations. Obviously, there is a very real possibility that the personal biases of the investigator and others involved in this early committee (team) may have affected the way in which the terms were chosen, defined, and employed. As a matter of fact, the group was not aware that the Austinian technique was being employed to the "T," so to speak; the steps of the technique as described simply "made good sense," and they were adopted. Thus, there was inevitably a certain amount of subjectivity present in the analysis that was made, and the results that were adopted unanimously by the committee for further use. One definite de-limitation, of course, is that the terms to be collected were only those that are used commonly in the professional preparation of teachers and coaches.

Related Literature

In a brief presentation such as this, no effort will be made to document the related literature from the field of philosophy per se that might be otherwise included. Certainly philosophy is at present in the midst of an "Age of Analysis," although no one would claim for a moment that this approach should be classified as a homogeneous school of thought (White, 1955). This present study seems to be "hovering" at some point in a category that Weitz has defined as "Linguistic, Ordinary Language, or Conceptual Analysis" (1966, p. 1).

Those who concern themselves with the history of philosophy will endeavor to determine as accurately as possible Russell's influence on his student, Wittgenstein, but none can deny the originality of the latter's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, first published in 1921. The language of philosophical discourse must

be phrased so that its propositions are meaningful and empirical in nature. If one hopes to understand and solve problems, language must be used correctly.

Since they were contemporaries and involved with the same "movement," one would think that Austin would almost of necessity be influenced by such a powerful and seminal thrust in philosophy as that engendered by Wittgenstein. It is true further that "Austin is sometimes counted among the group of philosophers vaguely labelled 'Wittgensteinians'." (Furberg, 1963, p. 62) Despite this, however, the burden of proof of any strong relationship still remains open for some future scholar. They were approaching philosophy in a very similar fashion, but their emphases do seem to have been different.

John Langshaw Austin was a classical scholar who turned to philosophy after taking a degree in classics at Oxford. He was undoubtedly influenced by Moore indirectly and more directly by Pritchard (Hampshire, 1959-60, xii). "Doing" philosophy for Moore, however, was definitely in the direction of analysis, while for Austin the question of classifying distinctions within language was uppermost. In the process Austin was what might be called a "team man," since he believed in the necessity of working in groups to define distinctions among the language expressions employed by those whose language was being "purified."

Language Analysis Within the Field of Physical Education. There has been very little ordinary language philosophy or conceptual analysis within the field of physical education. In 1970 when Fraleigh presented his definitive account and analysis of types of philosophic research that had been carried out in the 1960's, he included

"three types of research labeled as theory building, structural analysis, and phenomenology" (Fraleigh, 1971, pp. 29-30, in NCPEAM Proceedings). He did not exclude this methodology necessarily because of the lack of published material in physical education literature, but he might as well have taken such a stand. During that time James Keating of DePaul was beginning to make his case for the distinction between the terms "sport" and "athletics" in philosophical journals, but he has never agreed to classify himself as a philosopher of language (Keating, 1963, 201-210).

To the best of this writer's knowledge, the only physical education philosopher to consider the application of Austin's "linguistic phenomenology" to sport and physical education was the late Peter Spencer-Kraus, a student of this investigator at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana (1970). (As a matter of fact, it should be stated parenthetically that one of the reasons for this paper is to give this interesting and valuable technique of investigation a bit more "mileage" in the hope that others will consider employing it further.)

Other approaches of this nature to the philosophy of language, generally speaking, were made by two other former graduate students working with the writer - George Patrick and Kathleen Pearson. The study by Patrick was entitled "Verifiability (Meaningfulness) of Selected Physical Education Objectives," and it is important to understand that the purpose of this investigation was not to show that any such objectives were justified. An analytic description in terms of form and function of the stated objectives was made, and the normative part of the study was based on the descriptive analysis of the objectives and the kind of knowledge provided by logic,

ethics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of education. Positivism's "principle of verifiability" was subdivided into two forms: weak or logical possibility of confirmation, and strong or operationally testable. Objective statements were viewed as informative, expressive, directive, and performative. Three functions of objectives were stated (1) as a slogan, (2) as a guide to the educative process, and (3) as a test. It was found that objectives functioning as slogans were likely to be meaningless or verifiable in the second degree (weak); that objectives functioning as guides using informative-directive language were verifiable in the first or second degree; and that objectives functioning as a test must use the informative-directive mode of language before they could be considered verifiable in the first degree. Thus, "if physical educators wish to act responsibly, they should be able to state that for which they are accountable" (Patrick, 1971, p. 94).

Pearson's study was analytic in nature and certainly related to conceptual analysis within what has been called "philosophy of language by many. She examined (1) the structure of the multi-concept "integration-segregation" as it pertained to male and female participants in physical education classes, and (2) the functional aspects of this multi-concept in the intentional, purposive, and responsible actions of persons engaged in the professional endeavor called physical education (Pearson, 1971, p. 2). After extracting the various meanings attached to the concept and describing their extensional features in the "structural analysis" phase, Pearson proceeded to a "functional analysis" stage in which she delineated the reasons set forth for advocating the various "structures" or positions relative to the usage of the concept by writers in the

available literature. She considered the assumptions implicit within each of the reasons and the empirical evidence available to support or cast doubt on the validity of the hypotheses underlying these reasons. Lastly, the question was asked, "How might one be guided in making responsible decisions concerning the multi-concept in question?"

After carrying out the above steps, Pearson concluded specifically that physical educators attach many and varied meanings to the word "coeducation"; that the reasons set forth for this practice indicate a wide variety of objectives; that these claims or objectives have not been subjected to empirical research techniques; and that many contemporary physical educators still hold the dubious belief that jumping activities for girls and women cause injury to the pelvic organs. Generally speaking, she concluded that "the field is almost barren of empirical research to support or cast doubt on the advisability of integration-segregation of male and female participants in physical education classes"(pp. 213-214).

Methodology and Technique

J. L. Austin's technique was not spelled out in great length in innumerable papers as is sometimes the case with investigators, but the essence of it may be gleaned from his paper entitled, "A Plea for Excuses," as well as from his "Ifs and Cans" and from some notes called "Something About One Way of Possibly Doing One Part of Philosophy." (See Philosophical Papers published by The University Press in Oxford.) He himself coined the name "linguistic phenomenology" in connection with the technique (p. 130). In Austin's opinion there was hope in analyzing,

> . . . our common stock of words [which] embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many gene-

> rations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon -- the most favoured alternative method. (Ibid., p. 130)

Initially, the Committee at Illinois, after a series of meetings during which time it became apparent to all that they were not "talking the same language," decided which words and terms were relevant to the topic at hand -- the professional preparation of teachers and coaches. Even though they employed common sense and their professional judgment, they found that it was necessary to read the available literature on professional preparation in both so-called general professional education and also in the specialized professional education area of physical education. Then through the process of free association, they were able to eliminate words and also to begin to delineate shades and nuances of meaning of the words that were left. When disagreements developed, or when fine distinctions were not known, the group referred to a dictionary.

Referral to a dictionary was not the final answer, because it was discovered that still other terms - synonyms - were typically available for consideration as well. Early corroboration of this type was most helpful since it provided a helpful cross-check. As a result of this "field work" stage, the Committee decided to employ a minimum of twelve words (terms) and accompanying definitions to be used in the final statement that was to be framed to explain the professional preparation process as carefully and as precisely as possible.

The Committee proceeded to the second stage by attempting to relate clear and detailed examples of instances or circumstances

in which a particular term or word was preferred to another. Then, too, the members of the group made an effort to explain those times when the use of the word would not be appropriate. During this stage it is important that any and all theorizing be excluded. Achieving unanimity at this juncture may be somewhat difficult, but it is certainly less time-consuming if there are no unusual "personalities" in the group and if the members of the team are relatively inexperienced.

Finally, in the third stage, an effort is made to formulate the various terms under consideration into a coherent account that will stand close scrutiny. There will undoubtedly be changes and modifications in the preliminary account that is developed. The final account can be double-checked with some of the literature examined earlier to see to what extent changes have been made that will seemingly stand up under very close examination. After this was done in the Illinois situation, the final statements including the terms adopted were presented to a graduate seminar for the disinterested examination and evaluation that such a group of people would provide.

Findings

As a result of the "field work" stage, the Committee decided to employ the following words and definitions:

1. Fact - a real event, occurrence, quality, or relation based on evidence
2. Knowledge - acquaintance with fact; hence, scope of information
3. Understanding - comprehension of the meaning or interpretation of knowledge
4. Ability - quality or state of being able; capability; aptitude

5. Competency - sufficiency without excess; adequacy

6. Skill - expertness in execution of performance; a "quality of expertness"; a developed ability

7. Appreciation - a recognition of the worth of something

8. Attitude - position assumed or studied to serve a purpose

9. Experience - the actual living through an event(s) which may result in skill, understanding, ability, competency, appreciation, attitudes, etc.

10. Problem - a question proposed or difficult situation presented which may be met and/or solved by experience(s)

11. Resource Areas - those subject-matters (disciplinary areas) referred to for facts

12. Functions - the special duties or performances carried out by a person (or persons) in the course of assigned work

The formulation of the various terms into a coherent account that describes what might actually occur in an experimental undergraduate curriculum for teachers and coaches resulted in the following statement:

> A student is offered educational experiences in a classroom and/or laboratory setting. Through the employment of various types of educational methodology (lectures, discussions, problem-solving situations in theory and practice, etc.), he/she hears facts, increases the scope of information (knowledge), and learns to comprehend and interpret the material (understanding). Possessing various amounts of ability or aptitude, the student gradually develops competency and a certain degree or level of skill. It is hoped that certain appreciations about the worth of his/her profession will be developed, and that he/she will form certain attitudes about the work that lies ahead in his/her chosen field.
>
> In summary, there are certain special duties or performances which the student preparing for the teaching/coaching profession should fulfill (functions). Through the professional curriculum, he or she is exposed to both general and specific problems which must be met successfully. Through planned experiences, with a wide variety of resource areas to serve as "depositories" of facts, the professional student develops

competencies, skills, knowledge, understandings, appreciations, and attitudes which enable him/her to be an effective physical educator-coach.

Conclusion and Discussion

Based on this limited experience with the Austinian technique applied to ordinary language -- in this case some of the terms employed typically in the professional preparation of teachers and coaches -- this investigator was able to conclude that certain problems that have typically beset those concerned with professional preparation are very definitely caused by linguistic confusion. This linguistic confusion is present because of the equivocal use of many of the key words and terms.

This is not to say, however, that more detailed investigation of a similar nature would remove basic conflicts in educational philosophy that have plagued those concerned with the transmission to others of the art and science of the teaching/learning process. What constitutes education and teacher education ideally will not, in the opinion of this writer at least, be resolved by the possible prevention of further ambiguous usage of terms and idioms. These difficulties and differences of opinion are far too deep-rooted and steeped in hoary tradition to vanish within the space of a few decades, if ever.

There is absolutely no doubt, however, but that highly significant strides can be made in the near future if those interested in sport and physical education philosophy will labor to decrease the prevailing difficulties with language usage that exist at the present time. The late Peter Spencer-Kraus was preparing himself for this task, but his life was cut very short in a tragic car accident.

Patrick and Pearson have shown interest and ability along a similar, if not identical, line, and hopefully they will continue with this interest in the future. Others are urged to experiment with Austin's approach as well. It is relatively simple in design, but it may be difficult to bring together a team of investigators to carry out similar studies in the specialized area of sport and physical education. Such investigation would appear to be a necessary cornerstone for any further study in the years immediately ahead.

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